THE PENNY PIPER OF SARANAC

HERE DWELT
ROBERT-LOUIS-STEVENSON
DURING THE WINTER 1887-1888
"I was walking in the verandah of a small house outside the hamlet of Saranac. It was winter, the night was very dark, the air clear and cold and sweet with the purity of forests. For the making of a story here were fine conditions. "COME," SAID I TO MY ENGINE, LET US MAKE A TALE."
The Genesis of Ballantrae
Here he wrote "The Master of Ballantrae," "A Christmas Sermon," "The Lantern-Bearers," "Pulvis et Umbra," "Beggars," "Gentlemen" "A Chapter on Dreams"
1850 - 1894
Copyright 1915 By Gutzon Borglum

BY

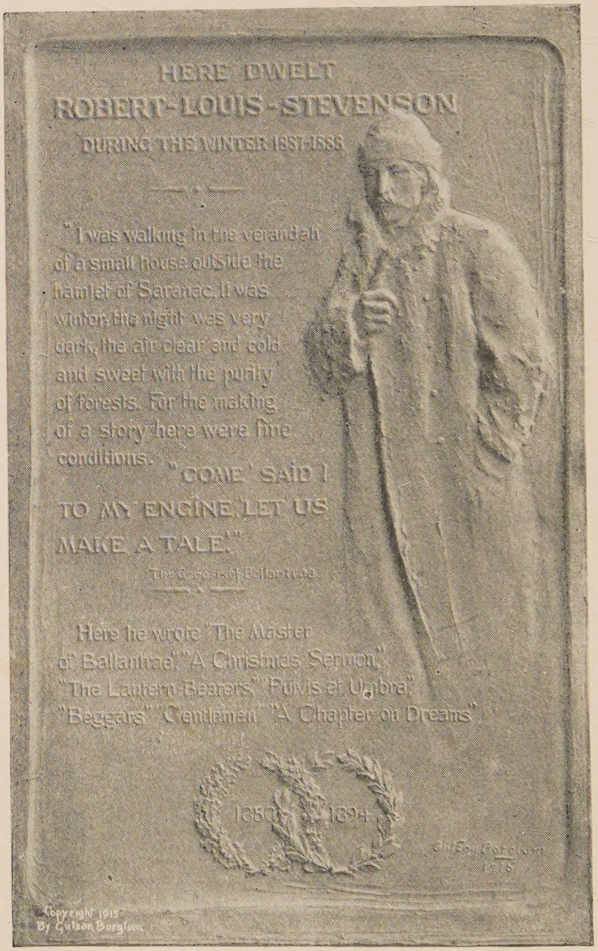
STEPHEN CHALMERS

Redwood Library
NEWPORT, R.I.
WITHDRAWN
THE GARDNER BLANCHARD PERRY FUND

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/pennypiperofsara0000step

The Penny Piper of Saranac


HERE DWELT
ROBERT-LOUIS-STEVENSON
DURING THE WINTER 1887-1888
"I was walking in the verandah of a small house outside the hamlet of Saranac. It was winter, the night was very dark, the air clear and cold and sweet with the purity of forests. For the making of a story there were fine conditions. "COME" SAID I TO MY ENGINE, "LET US MAKE A TALE."
The Genesis of Ballantrae
Here he wrote "The Master of Ballantrae," "A Christmas Sermon," "The Lantern-Bearers," "Fluvis et Umbra," "Beggars," "Gentlemen," "A Chapter on Dreams"
1850 - 1894
Gutzon Borglum 1915
Copyright 1915 By Gutzon Borglum

From a Copley Print copyright by Curtis & Cameron, Inc., Boston

THE SARANAC LAKE STEVENSON MEMORIAL

DESIGNED BY GUTZON BORGLUM

THE PENNY POEM OF SARANAC

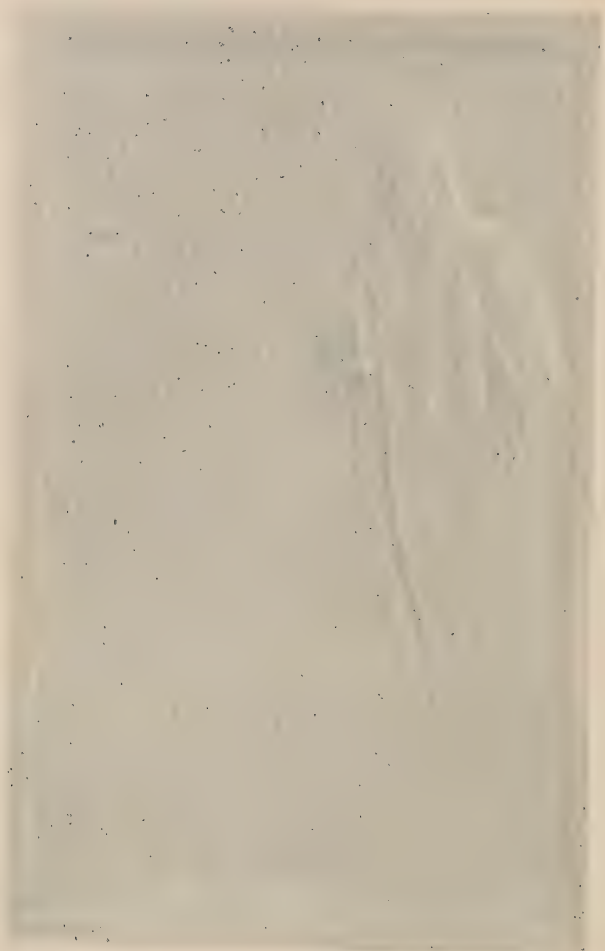
An Episode in Stevenson's Life

BY

STEPHAN CHALMERS

WITH A PREFACE BY
LORD GUTHRIE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
MDCCCCXVI



From a Copley Print copyrighted by Curtis & Cameron, Inc.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON MEMORIAL

THE PENNY PIPER OF SARANAC

An Episode in Stevenson's Life

BY

STEPHEN CHALMERS

WITH PREFACE BY
LORD GUTHRIE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
MDCCCCXVI

FEB 19 1917

34745

COPYRIGHT, 1912, BY THE OUTLOOK COMPANY
COPYRIGHT, 1916, BY STEPHEN CHALMERS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

6
St487C3

A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

W. E. Henley

PREFACE

By Lord Guthrie

"THE PENNY PIPER OF SARANAC" is a most sane and real sketch of Robert Louis Stevenson. I call it a sketch of Stevenson, and not merely of his life at Saranac, for it shows much insight into his character, which was so complex that many people of broad minds but narrow sympathies thought it contradictory.

His Puritanism was every bit as genuine as his Bohemianism. Such people could not, and their pres-

ent-day representatives cannot, understand this. But that was, and is, their fault; not his. When people ask me what I thought of Stevenson, when, in the early seventies, we were much together in Edinburgh, at college and in the Speculative Society, and in 17 Heriot Row, his father's house, I usually reply, "Which Stevenson? I knew at least four!"

"The Penny Piper of Saranac" has attained what I thought the impossible, for there is not a "chestnut" in it! Most Stevensoniana are full of them, always old, sometimes stale, and more than occasion-

ally rotten, in the sense that they attribute to him sayings and actions which those who knew Stevenson as I knew him are able to say instinctively he could never, and would never, have said or done.

Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, in his Saranac memorial bas-relief, has got beneath the surface and behind the mask as Saint-Gaudens (fine as his bas-relief is, as a work of art) never did. I liked the first sight of Borglum's work; and it grows on me. It has charm, and it has strength, and it has pathos. It is the invalid, but the invalid who can say, "O Pain! Where is

thy victory?" It is the fascinating personality of a man of genius who, with all his gaiety of manner and desire to give pleasure, was yet, in a matter of essential principle, like flint — a block of iron painted to look like a lath!

Swanston Cottage,
Colinton,
Midlothian, Scotland

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE following brief sketch of Robert Louis Stevenson's life at Saranac Lake during the winter of 1887–88, was done in collaboration with the late Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, who carefully edited the original manuscript, paying particular attention to the precise wording, so far as his memory served him, of the various conversations between the distinguished patient and himself.

The essay has had a lively career which, the author hopes, is

only beginning. First published in the *Outlook*, it was later reproduced from a backwoods printshop as a souvenir of the unveiling at Saranac Lake of Gutzon Borglum's memorial tablet, erected by the Stevenson Society. Stevenson himself might have described that modest edition as "a penny plain" and the present one, in the dignity of real covers, as "twopence colored." To *Munsey's* the author acknowledges permission to reproduce the verses which appear elsewhere.

Since the essay's first publication many things connected with it have

transpired. The present writer's collaborator has passed to his deserved long rest. He died a few days after the lasting bronze had been uncovered "at the cottage up the road" in honor of his quondam friend and patient; and his last message from the sick-chamber was, "I am glad to have lived to see it done."

It is not claiming too much to say that it was directly the influence of "The Penny Piper of Saranac" that led to the creation of the Saranac Lake Stevenson Memorial. While the author was working on the manuscript, Rob-

ert Hobart Davis, a well-known New York editor, visited the Adirondacks and heard, through the writer, some of the late Dr. Trudeau's reminiscent anecdotes of Stevenson. Realizing for the first time, perhaps, that at Saranac Lake the famous Scot had really produced his best contributions to English literature, Mr. Davis started an agitation for the erection of a suitable memorial. He enlisted the interest of his friend, Gutzon Borglum, the noted sculptor, who created his design as a personal tribute to the genius of R. L. S. The committee which

had the work in hand is now resolved into the Stevenson Society of America, with an increasing membership and a rapidly growing collection of Stevensoniana.

Since the first publication of "The Penny Piper of Saranac" its author has heard but two anecdotes which might have been included in the original essay.

During Stevenson's stay at the Baker Cottage in the mountain hamlet, the Church of St. Luke the Beloved Physician, founded by Dr. Trudeau, had recently been built. Stevenson's mother, who was staying with him in Saranac

Lake, was much interested in the church's affairs. It is well known that the author had a strong aversion to hero-worshipers and lion-hunters — especially of the more inquisitive sex; so when Mrs. Estella Martin, a member of an old Adirondack family, drove up to the cottage to confer with Mrs. Stevenson about a proposed church supper, R. L. S. took refuge in his "cubbyhole" study and firmly shut the door. His mother prepared tea for the guest and suddenly said, "I would like you to meet my son, Louis."

Mrs. Martin, who had heard

of the novelist's pet aversion, felt slightly nervous. Mrs. Stevenson went to the study door and there followed a whispered colloquy through a mere chink. Presently Stevenson came into the room, sat down by the stove, and, after a strained minute or two, asked Mrs. Martin if he might smoke. The moment his cigarette was alight the ice was broken and —

"I had two hours of R. L. S.," says Mrs. Martin, "and he was the most interesting man I ever met."

Later, it was planned to give the church benefit supper at the old Berkeley Inn in the village.

On the promise of Stevenson's mother that she would induce her son — somehow — to be present, the church ladies sold every available seat, except one — that reserved for the lion of the occasion. Despite the elder Mrs. Stevenson's assurances, up to the last moment Robert Louis refused to be a party to the party. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "They might ask me to make a *speech!*"

In the end the ladies had to kidnap him bodily. At first he was silent, even morose, when he took his seat at the supper table in the old inn; but suddenly the humor

of the situation struck him and his chameleon-like mood changed color. He threw himself into the affair with a spirit that was more Stevensonian than churchlike. He not only proceeded to enjoy himself, but helped to make that church supper a memorable success; and before he escorted his mother home, he *insisted* upon making a speech.

All record of that speech is lost — more's the pity! Mrs. Martin does not remember just what he said, but —

"It was — like him."

No doubt it was!

S. C.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Saranac Lake Stevenson Memorial designed by Gutzon Borglum . . . . . *Frontispiece*

The Room where Stevenson wrote "A Christmas Sermon," "The Lantern-Bearers," etc. . . . 8

The Stevenson Cottage at Saranac Lake 8

The Stevenson Cottage 48
Andrew Baker discussing R. L. S. with a Literary Pilgrim

The Veranda where Stevenson walked and dreamed 48

Gutzon Borglum and his Tribute to R. L. S. 60

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Baker . . 60

The Penny Piper of Saranac

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Out of the land of the ancient bards
A wandering minstrel strayed;
Courage and hope were the song he sang,
And faith was the string he played.
"I care not what the end," he cried,
"So the road be fair and free;
For the greater gift of life is his
Who travels cheerily!"

Earth was his house and heaven his roof;
Sun, moon, and stars his light;
Voices of wind and wood and wave
His music day and night.
Over his clouds the lark sang still;
And when the light was gone,
Thrilling the dark of crouching doom,
His nightingale sang on.

So let us be, as the minstrel sang,
Of faith, and hope, and love,
Though the snarling waters scowl beneath,
And thunder rolls above.
After the rain, the night of stars;
After the night, the dawn;
And that day goes down to a splendid death,
Which lights another's morn!

The Penny Piper of Saranac

He called himself the Penny Piper, and apologized to his friends because sometimes his whistle exploded with strange noises and had to be patched with sticking-plaster. Yet when he played on his pipe the whole world listened, fascinated even by the strange noises; and the army of earth's children that followed him — that is following him still — was greater than the Pied Piper of Hamelin ever enthralled.

He was an odd fellow to look at, as, of course, a magic piper should be. Eagle-beaked and eagle-eyed, his face was ever touched with a Pan-like humor, "a deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck." Whimsical, purposeful, quick-tempered, generous, selfish, lovable, fierce, forgiving — a human paradox.

This was the Penny Piper of Saranac, and he was something of a mystery to all who knew him in the little Adirondack village. They did not know that he was a great man, for he never happened to mention the fact himself, and even the beginnings of the world were

away on the other side of forty miles of tangled forest.

He did not fish. He did not hunt. He lacked the principal virtue of man in the wilderness — physical strength; and for a living he seemed only to tootle upon a penny whistle and cut a fantastic figure upon skates on the lake behind the cottage where he lived.

The cottage was "a hat-box on a hill," as the Penny Piper himself said. All the winds of heaven blew around it. Below, the Saranac River snarled and guggled under its piled-up jam of ice. Beyond, Mount Pisgah glowered under

icicled brows at Mount Baker behind the cottage. The Penny Piper said the only redeeming feature of the place was that it reminded him of some place else.

Most of all was he a mystery to his landlady and her lord. The Penny Piper burned holes in Mrs. Baker's sitting-room mantelpiece with the live ends of his cigarettes. In the evenings he would play Ancient Mariner to Andrew Baker's Wedding Guest. The Piper would talk to the woodsman, uttering strange matters, until Andrew's eyes grew heavy and his head nodded, and he was lulled to sleep in

his chair by the magic spell of a genius.

In the daytime, when the blizzard piled snowdrifts window-high, the Penny Piper made "big medicine" in his little room under the southern gable of the "hat-box." In this room there was an old desk adorned with pens, ink, and paper; also a piano — and the penny whistle.

"He tootles the whistle better 'n he plays the piano!" said Mrs. Baker to her spouse.

"And a sight oftener," said the woodsman.

Of course he did! Who ever

bitter winter of 1887–88, the Penny Piper played some of his sweetest melodies; his notes reached their purest and clearest heights; and to-day what he wrote under that little southern gable, where the drift-snow piled up against the window, is bound in morocco and gold, is scrolled on vellum and hung as mottoes in garret and mansion alike, in the offices of commerce and in the waiting-rooms of pain, in the temples of wisdom and in the heart of humanity, for it brings strength to the strong and cheer to the sick.

These but conspired with his

genius and the keen air of the hills to such results as "Pulvis et Umbra," "The Lantern-Bearers," "Gentlemen," "Beggars," "A Christmas Sermon," and last (perhaps least) "The Master of Ballantrae," which ends in story where it was begun in fact — in the frozen forest under the shadow of Mount Baker.

When Robert Louis Stevenson lived there, Saranac Lake village was but a backwoods hamlet. The first locomotive had not yet startled the buck and the bear.

The community which is now

the metropolis of the Adirondacks had in 1887 less than a handful of the thousands who have since followed the trail first blazed in that region by Dr. Edward L. Trudeau, himself a victim of tuberculosis. Everybody knows why Stevenson went to Saranac, and everybody knows that Dr. Trudeau was his physician.

It has been said, upon hearsay, that Dr. Trudeau, the famous head of the Adirondack Cottage Sanitarium,[1] and Robert Louis Stevenson did not get along to-

[1] Since Dr. Trudeau's death, "Trudeau Sanatorium."

gether very well. This is without foundation in fact. Stevenson himself wrote on a leaf of the "Jekyll and Hyde" of "Dr. Trudeau's Complete Set, from the Author": —

"Trudeau was all the winter at my side,
I never spied the nose of Mr. Hyde."

Dr. Trudeau was probably one of the few in the village at that time who appreciated what manner of man had come to it; and it is clear that Stevenson was quick to appreciate the intellectual qualities of the man who came to see him, first with a cold stetho-

scope, then with the warm hand of friendship.

This friendship was spontaneous. The nature of it may be judged from the fact that, when they did not agree, they did not agree to disagree,—after the manner of the lukewarm,—but quarreled!

But the quarrels! They were of the kind indulged in by brothers who part with black murder in their hearts and burst out laughing next time they meet. They were quarrels of the kind in which one holds it a private, personal privilege to criticize the other, but

woe unto the third person who ventures to criticize either to the other!

On the really great things of life they were in perfect accord; so they chose the most trivial matters upon which to differ.

The best illustration of this is, perhaps, the "check story," which Dr. Trudeau used to relate, and always with immense delight. There was no stenographer present, and Dr. Trudeau himself did not undertake to repeat the exact dialogue, but from the facts and from a knowledge of the two personalities this is how it was: —

Stevenson: My dear Trudeau! I have the greatest respect for your intelligence. For that reason it distresses me — distresses me! — to hear you utter such fallacy. How *can* the American baggage system be superior to the British luggage system?

Trudeau: But, my dear Stevenson, we are dealing with facts! I know that, as a Britisher, you are naturally prejudiced —

Stevenson (*interrupting*): I beg your pardon, Dr. Trudeau. I would never allow racial prejudice to warp my judgment in the matter of a ten-and-sixpenny trunk. The British system *is* the best. You hire a porter. You look after your

own luggage. At your destination you claim it in person. It is not at all necessary to put your head out of the compartment at every stop and cry, like the Irishman: "Gyard! Is me tronk all right?"

Trudeau (*who has been waiting with fortitude for a chance to continue*): Of course not. Now, then, — the American system! You are bound, say, from New York to San Francisco. You buy your railway ticket, indicate your baggage to a baggage-master with a pencil stuck in his ear and a bunch of tags in his hands. He gives you a brass check. In a week you are in San Francisco. You have n't seen or heard of your

blessed trunk since you left New York; yet there it is, safe and sound. And all that is required of you in San Francisco is that brass check. *Now* what have you to say?

Stevenson (*who is cornered, but hates to admit it*): We—ell . . . (*He puffs great clouds of cigarette smoke and walks up and down, greatly agitated. Then, with a burst of exasperation*) That is just you Americans all over! Checks! Checks! Checks! You eat on the check system. You hang your hat on the check system. Why, an American can't speak of dying without saying that he "hands in his checks"!

Trudeau (*twenty years later*): He had me that time.

After such animated discussion one may picture Dr. Trudeau as he tramps down the road to his own house, a muffled figure in coonskin cap and coat, his thick moccasins crunching on the frozen snow under the clear, snapping stars of the Adirondack midwinter, and vowing never to darken the Penny Piper's door again!

But next day Trudeau would remember that Stevenson was a sick man, that he was his physician, and that it was his duty to go and see his patient even if he could

never meet him again as a friend. If he did n't go, no doubt the Penny Piper would be sitting in that eight-by-ten room with the piano and the old desk and the penny whistle, and with all the air excluded through the keyhole by cigarette smoke and sideward displacement.

Probably about the same time Stevenson would be blowing from his whistle that mournful Jacobite air to which he fitted "Sing me a song of a lad that is gone," and wondering whether he ought not to put on his buffalo coat and Indian moccasins and carry

the hatchet to the Doctor for burial.

If it happened that he did not go, the Doctor would come sooner or later — professionally, of course! Robert Louis would receive him like a prince. Each would admit that the other was possibly right about the baggage system, except, perhaps, that —

And as like as not they would start in just where they had left off; or, if that subject were exhausted, take up another for argument, such as whether, according to Trudeau's theory, it were not wiser to conserve the health by observing mod-

eration (say in the use of cigarettes), or, according to Stevenson's theory, regard ill health as something altogether outside a man and death merely a possibility of any minute and from any of a number of unexpected causes.

In this connection it is interesting to hear what Dr. Trudeau has to say about Stevenson's death in Samoa in 1894. It has been said that he died of tuberculosis. It has been said that he died of apoplexy.

"He did not die of tuberculosis," says Dr. Trudeau, "as I made a point of finding out. I have no documentary evidence that he died

of anything else, but all the dispatches from Samoa agreed that it was cerebral apoplexy. Yet it is a mistake to say that he never had tuberculosis. Although, while I took care of him, he had none of the active symptoms, such as hemorrhage, or fever, or tubercle bacilli, present, yet he undoubtedly had had tuberculosis. It may have become active again after he left Saranac, so there is no telling just how much that disease may have contributed to his mortal illness at Samoa."

Regarding a theory brought forward some years ago in a

prominent medical publication, and copied extensively in the newspapers, that the morbid phase of Stevenson's genius was caused by tubercular toxin in his blood, Dr. Trudeau laughed heartily. If anything could be named to account for the production of such strange or morbid tales as "Jekyll and Hyde," "Olalla," and "The Merry Men," it would be the Celtic corpuscles in his blood!

The horrible fascination of the supernatural for the Scot is well known. The fearful fascination of the sea, as exploited in "The Merry Men," is also a character-

istic of the high northern races, especially of the Scottish Highlanders, who in ancient days drew an infusion of blood from the Vikings. There was evidence of the Viking strain in Stevenson and his seagoing forefathers. Race toxin is the only influence his blood may have brought to his writings.

While on the subject, it is hardly necessary to state that Stevenson was much interested in the admirable work Dr. Trudeau was doing in tuberculosis research. Unfortunately, while on paper the Penny Piper could deal so beautifully with the philosophy of illness and death,

his own physical weakness, and that personal sensitiveness which he so ably embodied in young Weir of Hermiston, compelled in him a horror of the material facts. He did not fish or hunt, because he could not bear the sight of suffering and death, even in animals that are regarded as fair game.

Imagine, then, what happened when, in a heroic moment, Stevenson ventured into Dr. Trudeau's laboratory, where the little guinea-pigs were being immortalized for the ultimate benefit of humanity and humaneness. Had Stevenson lived to hear the anti-vivisection

uproar of recent years, the zoophiles might have offered him their permanent chairmanship. But if we know anything of the Penny Piper's spirit, we fancy he would have refused it. The fact that he himself suffered imaginative agonies of sympathy for the guinea-pigs did not in the least becloud his vision of the end toward which sacrifice of some sort, not necessarily of blood, is ever the only means.

Here is the guinea-pig story, which illustrates the theory: —

One day the Penny Piper's genius was deeply stirred. The whistle had been silent all morn-

ing, for it was a great thought he had seized upon. It was that of the lantern-bearers, the playful Scottish boys who carried bull's-eyes under their jackets and occasionally flashed them upon astonished passers-by. You could not see the lanterns, but it was a secret joy to each lad to know that he had his under cover, even if his whole being did reek of oil.

Ah! it was a grand thought, this, of the light under the bushel that smelled of oil, and in his little room the Penny Piper's pen moved slowly and steadily over the paper: —

. . . Not a ray escaping, whether to conduct your footsteps or to make your glory public; a mere pillar of darkness in the dark, and all the while deep down in the privacy of your fool's heart, to know you had a bull's-eye at your belt, and to exult and sing over the knowledge.

When it was finished, the Penny Piper remembered that Dr. Trudeau had promised to show him the mysteries of his laboratory. Still aglow with the high thoughts of "The Lantern-Bearers," Stevenson put on his buffalo coat and hurried away through the snow.

The sight of the grave scientist bending over his work in that strange place of crucibles and tubes stirred the dreamer's enthusiasm afresh. Here was the thought materialized — the man with the bull's-eye, who was thinking less of fame than of the moment's task allotted.

The Penny Piper told his friend of the day's work, talking as only he talked, every muscle and facial expression in action, his eyes aglow, and his long arms gesturing in illustration. But suddenly he remembered why he had come to the laboratory.

"Now, Trudeau," said he, "let me see your light!"

Dr. Trudeau picked up a tube containing a sickly-looking liquid.

"The scum you see in this tube," said he, "is consumption. It is the cause of more human suffering than anything else in the world. We can produce tuberculosis in the guinea-pig with it, and if we could cure tuberculosis in the guinea-pig, this great burden of human suffering might be lifted from the world."

Then he told of his own experiments upon guinea-pigs with

cultures of tubercle bacilli, and produced charts showing results that made similar symptoms in the human case comprehensible, and more combatable. He pointed to a row of large stoppered bottles containing tuberculous organs of guinea-pigs, ghastly evidences of the destroyer's poison. With a bottle in his hand, Trudeau turned to his very silent companion and — found that Robert Louis Stevenson had vanished!

Astonished and puzzled, the medical scientist laid down his charts and went in search of the Penny Piper. He found him in the

open air, leaning against a veranda post and looking very pale.

Trudeau (*rushing to his side*): Stevenson, are you ill?

Stevenson (*swallowing hard*): N—no.

Trudeau: You don't look well. How do you feel?

Stevenson (*with a brave but sickly smile*): Trudeau, I know—I know your lamp is very bright, but—to me it smells of oil like the devil!

The Penny Piper was fair above all things, however, and he generously admitted that the fact of an oil smell upsetting a particular

stomach did not dim the luster of a particular light.

Seven years after Stevenson's death, Thomas Bailey Aldrich came to Saranac Lake on account of the illness of his son, Charles. He lived on the side of Mount Pisgah that overlooked the "hat-box" where the Penny Piper lived thirteen years before. In a letter to William Dean Howells at this time (December, 1901), Aldrich wrote: "We are very literary up here. Why did Hutton go to Jerusalem for 'Literary Landmarks' when he might have

found plenty of them in the Adirondacks? Among others who have left footprints on the sands of time are Stillman, Emerson, and Stevenson."

Referring to Mr. Howells's admission that up to that time he had never read a novel of Stevenson's, Mr. Aldrich wrote in the same letter: "You have missed an entertaining writer, though not a great one."

In passing, it may be mentioned that that dear fiction about Richard Mansfield visiting the Baker cottage and acting "Jekyll and Hyde" for the author's benefit is

without foundation. Our talkative Penny Piper would surely have mentioned such an event in his letters to Henry James, or J. A. Symonds, or Sidney Colvin. Certainly he could hardly have helped doing so, had the incident occurred, to his collaborator in dramas, W. E. Henley. But he did not. Dr. Trudeau has no knowledge of such a visit. Andrew Baker, Stevenson's landlord, thinks that the persistent tale grew out of the visit of a dramatic agent of Boston,[1] who came to Saranac Lake in the hope

[1] I have ascertained since that the Thespian visitor was Daniel Bandmann. (S. C.)

of procuring certain dramatic rights from Stevenson.

As to Stevenson's being "not very popular," to revert to a suggestion in one of Mr. Aldrich's letters, he had little in common coin with the "natives" of that time, and the social, literary, and intellectual circle was limited. He was highly popular among those in the little colony who could appreciate him; and interesting, though few, are the true stories touching his social intercourse at this time.

One dinner of unusual ceremony may have suggested to Stevenson the sentence, "I have

learned to move among pompous menials without much terror, never without much respect."

At this particular dinner Stevenson was not in evening dress. The Penny Piper was notoriously unconventional in attire. Besides, as Aldrich mentioned later, "the Saranackers don't dress for dinner, they dress for breakfast," and did not Stevenson assure Will H. Low that he was "a rank Saranacker, a wild man of the woods"?

Anyway, the dinner was a fine affair. The butler appeared at an appropriate moment and elevated a single eyebrow to convey that

madam was served. As there were more gentlemen present than ladies, Dr. Trudeau "took in" Stevenson. As the Doctor playfully offered his arm, the Penny Piper clutched it in a kind of panic.

Trudeau: What's the matter?

Stevenson: Honest, now — aren't you scared?

Trudeau: Well, not exactly scared; impressed, perhaps.

Stevenson (shaking his head): Trudeau, I'm scared to death!

It was after one less imposing dinner that Stevenson expressed his terror of a hero-worshiping admirer. She was of the type that

qualifies everything with superlatives. All through the evening she kept assuring the Penny Piper that "Jekyll and Hyde" was the "weirdest," "Treasure Island" the "loveliest," and "Will o' the Mill" the "sweetest" — ever!

When Stevenson escaped, he sought Dr. Trudeau's protection.

"I don't mind the Great Unwashed," he whispered tragically. "It's the Great Washed I dread!"

From the literary standpoint the most interesting story of the Penny Piper and his friends in Saranac has to do with the genesis of "The

Master of Ballantrae" and the beginning of the real Stevenson woman in fiction.

Up to this time the women in his books, excepting Jim Hawkins's mother in "Treasure Island," had been somewhat of stage type. Jim Hawkins's mother was true, but Stevenson had his own deeply honest and just mother to draw from. There was an elusive girl in "The Merry Men," but she was shadowy; and in "Prince Otto" Seraphina and Madame von Rosen were encased in court artifice. He had not yet touched the deep springs of natural womanhood.

To appreciate the far-reaching effects of the incident that brought the Penny Piper's magic pen to the true delineation of women in his later works, it is necessary to begin at Saranac with "The Master of Ballantrae" and to show how General Custer's widow injected a failure into it. But it was a failure on which success was to be built.

Even as at Saranac the plot of "The White Feather" flashed upon Thomas Bailey Aldrich "out of a blue sky of idleness," so came the genesis of "Ballantrae" to the Penny Piper. In Stevenson's own words, this is how it was: —

I was walking one night on the verandah of a small house in which I lived, outside the hamlet of Saranac. It was winter; the night was very dark; the air extraordinarily clear and cold, and sweet with the purity of forests. From a good way below, the river was to be heard contending with ice and boulders; a few lights appeared, scattered unevenly in the darkness, but so far away as not to lessen the sense of isolation. For the making of a story here were fine conditions. . . .

"Come," said I to my engine, "let us make a tale, a story of many years and countries, of the sea and the land, savagery and civilization. . . ."

Shortly after that December night he was again at a dinner-party. Most of the little colony were present, but for my purpose it is only needful to mention Mrs. Custer, Dr. Trudeau, and Robert Louis Stevenson. After the soup, Mrs. Custer opened fire upon the Penny Piper.

Mrs. Custer: Now, why is it, Mr. Stevenson, that you never put a real woman in your stories?

Stevenson (with twinkling gravity): Madam, I have little knowledge of Greek.

Mrs. Custer: But you have some knowledge of women, surely!

Why, you have been a married man these seven years!

Stevenson: With the result, Mrs. Custer, that I have forgotten all the Greek I ever knew.

Mrs. Custer: But the public expects it of you, and the feminine portion demands it. Come! When are we to be introduced to the Stevenson woman in fiction?

Stevenson (with sudden enthusiasm): Mrs. Custer! I promise you there shall be a woman in my next book!

The Penny Piper regretted his rash gallantry before the close of the evening. Later, he confided his fears to Dr. Trudeau.

Trudeau: I've often wondered, Stevenson, but never thought to ask: Why do you never put a real woman in a story?

Stevenson: Good Heavens! Trudeau, when I have tried I find she talks like a grenadier!

Nevertheless, he kept his promise to Mrs. Custer, and the result is that wooden effigy in "The Master of Ballantrae," who is called, for identification's sake, Alison Durie.

But the ice was broken, and from this point the evolution of the real Stevenson woman in fiction is interesting to trace. Jim Pinker-

ton's wife in "The Wrecker" is true — almost painfully true. Catriona in "David Balfour" is better — much; but both are girls. It is not until we meet Uma in "The Beach of Falesa" and a full-grown heroine in "St. Ives" that we begin to find boldness and accuracy in his strokes.

For this, as for many other reasons, what a pity that death stayed his hand in "Weir of Hermiston," for in the elder Kirstie he was etching a masterpiece of deep womanhood — "a severe case of middle age." But the work had progressed far enough to indicate

beyond cavil that "Greek" might safely be added to his accomplishments.

Stevenson's place in the memory of Saranac Lake is unique. The people have forgotten the actual face of the man; and the record of his life there — of the many little things not down on the page of conventional literary history — is becoming obliterated by time. Seldom does a visitor make pilgrimage to that little room under the southern gable where the Penny Piper tootled on his whistle and penned golden

letters in the intervals. But the echo of the magic pipe is still in the air, although the Penny Piper has vanished.

There is no place where his works are more popular for their own sake, aside from their author's having lived there; for in all the world there is no place that needs and benefits by his brave creed of living more than Saranac Lake. It is a place of patient suffering, of ships that sometimes pass in the night. It is, like Stevenson personally, something of a tragedy, but, as in the case of the Penny Piper, none would

THE STEVENSON COTTAGE

ANDREW BAKER DISCUSSING R. L. S. WITH A LITERARY PILGRIM

THE VERANDA WHERE STEVENSON
WALKED AND DREAMED

ever know it except from acute contact and observation.

There are over one thousand persons in that Adirondack village brought there by the same chance that led Robert Louis Stevenson to the hills; and if they would keep their courage strong and their faith in the world's goodness intact, their viewpoint must of necessity be that which Stevenson engraved upon the rocks of Mount Baker. It was indeed "big medicine" for the after-comers that the Penny Piper made in the little house up the road.

No one asserts that the brief

passage of Stevenson through one Saranac winter is wholly responsible for the atmosphere of peace and good-will which is a peculiar and seemingly unchangeable characteristic of that mountain village. But what he wrote while there has a tremendous application there, and Dr. Trudeau pressed the application with that of his own broad humanity. The result is startling to the newcomer — a place with an atmosphere distinctively its own. It would take a genius to define this atmosphere, but the genius of Thomas Bailey Aldrich did it when, the shadow

of his son's doom hanging heavily upon him, he could write to William Dean Howells: "There's a charm about the place. There's something in the air to heal the heart of sorrow."

The works of the Penny Piper are ever in demand at the village library, but there is one book in that institution which none may borrow or even touch. It is "Morley Ernstein," by G. P. R. James.

A few months ago the librarian was looking over Stevenson's "Letters," when he came upon one to Mr. E. L. Burlingame. In it the Penny Piper feverishly asked

for certain works of "dear old G. P. R."

"This return to an ancient favorite," wrote the Piper, "hangs upon an accident. The Franklin County Library contains two works of his, 'The Cavalier' and 'Morley Ernstein.' I read the first with indescribable amusement — it was worse than I feared, and yet somehow engaging; the second (to my surprise) was better than I dared to hope; a good, honest, dull, interesting tale."

The librarian laid down the volume of letters, and walked to the shelf where the remaining

tatters of G. P. R. should be. "The Cavalier" was gone — long since defunct; but there was the "Morley Ernstein," yellowed and falling to pieces with age, for none had thought it fit to read since the days of the Penny Piper. There followed a sudden demand for "Morley Ernstein," by G. P. R. James, but the librarian was firm. Morley is now an honored pensioner, withdrawn from common traffic.

The creed of the Penny Piper is almost a rule of mental conduct laid down for patients, not only

by specialists of Saranac Lake, but by many of the medical fraternity elsewhere. There is a case on record of a young man who arrived in the village with the usual excuse for arriving. He was examined by a physician, who presently asked the new patient whether his New York physician had prescribed anything.

"Yes," said the patient, and he produced this prescription: —

℞

Fresh air,

" eggs.

Read Robert Louis Stevenson.

POTTER, M.D.

"Continue to take!" said the physician.

The influence of Dr. Trudeau upon the methods of anti-tuberculosis fighters is not without a suggestion of the influence of Stevenson upon Trudeau. When, as President of the Eighth Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons, Dr. Trudeau addressed his fellows at Washington, he thus paid tribute to the Penny Piper of Saranac, who had seen the light in his laboratory away back in the dark days: —

Let us not, therefore, quench

the faith nor turn from the vision which, whether we own it or not, we carry, as Stevenson's lantern-bearers their lanterns, hidden from the outer world, and, thus inspired, many will reach the goal; and if for most of us our achievements inevitably fall short of our ideals, if when age and infirmity overtake us "we come not within sight of the castle of our dream," nevertheless all will be well with us, for, as Stevenson tells us rightly, "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive, and the true success is in labor."

THE END

Appendix

Appendix

Address by Lloyd Osbourne (read by proxy) at the Unveiling of the Memorial to Robert Louis Stevenson at the Baker Cottage, Saranac Lake, New York, October 30, 1915.

How little could Stevenson have anticipated, as he walked up and down the veranda in the rare intervals of a very bleak sunshine, or (so much more often the case), as he huddled close to the fire with the logs hissing and the frosted windows steaming, that twenty-nine years later this spot would be hallowed to many through no other fact than his once having lived here. He would have been profoundly touched, and no doubt as profoundly dismayed. He had ever

too much humor to take himself seriously. I can almost hear him cry out: "Good Heavens, I hope nobody is going to take *me* as the model of anything." Yet deep down, of course, he would have felt a very human thrill of pleasure. It is no small thing in this forgetful world for any one to be remembered years after his death; to have one's memory kept green and one's personal mementoes treasured; to evoke from the hearts of the living, and those strangers, affection and homage.

Once in this house Stevenson laid down the copy of "Don Quixote" he was reading, and said, with a curious poignancy that lingers still in my ears: "That 's what I am — just another Don Quixote." I think this was the most illuminating thing he ever said about himself. It was the realization

GUTZON BORGLUM AND HIS TRIBUTE TO R. L. S.

MR. AND MRS. ANDREW BAKER

that his high-flown ideals, his super-sensitive honor, his vehement resentment of wrong and injustice were perhaps hopelessly at discord with the world he lived in — the momentary faltering of a great altruist. It is surprising that in his essay on "Books that have Influenced Me" I believe he made no mention of "Don Quixote," yet in conversation I can recall his referring to it often — "that it was the saddest book he had ever read"; "that Don Quixote was the greatest gentleman in fiction"; "that the Duke and Duchess were a pair of detestable cads to make sport of the old fellow, and he their guest." Moreover, he had even stumbled through the original in his halting, laborious Spanish.

Stevenson had a wonderful reading voice; I have never heard any one

who could equal him; in listening to him one was stirred by an indescribable sense of romance, of emotion,—of the heartstrings being played upon. I imagine, from what I have heard, that Charles Dickens possessed the same magic quality of evolving so complete an illusion that the fictive characters seemed alive—that one seemed to see as well as hear them—that the scenes merged imperceptibly from description into poetic fact. In the long winter evenings in Saranac, Stevenson read aloud "Othello," "The Tempest," "Julius Cæsar," and "Macbeth"; read them with mantling face and increasing enthusiasm till the old room seemed to disappear in the glittering pageantry and matchless, swelling periods of Shakespeare.

It is one of the most regrettable things about Stevenson that his long

hair and strange attire are always assumed to be an affectation. On the contrary, he was a man absolutely devoid of pose, and hated it and derided it in others. But during his prolonged illnesses, when often for weeks at a time he would be condemned to lie in the same position lest a single movement might bring on a fresh hemorrhage of the lungs, his hair would grow excessively long; as cutting it afterwards often caused him to catch cold (and a cold to him meant a repetition of the frightful illness), it was left much as it was, save for a slight trimming. The shawls, cloaks, etc., so familiar and so fantastic, in his photographs, were only too often seized up hastily and thrown over his nightgown to keep him from the fatigue of dressing. The truth is, that until he went to Samoa, where he enjoyed

a sufficiency of health that allowed him to dress and wear his hair in the ordinary manner, every day might have been his last. So far, indeed, from his long hair and singular clothing being a mark of affectation, they are a pathetic reminder of his sick-room, and show how rarely he emerged from it into the light of day.

It is not easy for those who loved him to forgive such tales as his walking down Piccadilly—"very jauntily," as the book observes—in a lady's fur coat, pilfered from a party, and with a bunch of daffodils at his neck; and similar falsehoods, too often malicious in their origin. I would beg all admirers of Robert Louis Stevenson not to credit such idiocies, which some people, who knew him well, have not been ashamed to put into circulation. It is hard to conceive of a more suc-

cessful form of disparagement, nor one better calculated to rouse dislike and scorn.

I wish I could write more, and that better, of this high-minded, high-hearted, generous, inspiring man, whose life was a tragedy of ill health redeemed by an heroic courage. That he faltered at times — that he had his moments of despair — only serves to make his intrepid spirit shine the brighter, and aids us to emulate him in our lesser trials. I think those who honor his memory honor themselves, for it is the generous who appreciate generosity, and the courageous, courage, and the charitable, charity and kindness, and it is in fellow-feeling that this little party assembles here to-day to pay a beautiful tribute to the dead.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

Redwood Library

SELECTIONS FROM THE RULES

1. Three volumes may be taken at a time and only three on one share. Two unbound numbers of a monthly and three numbers of a weekly publication are counted as a volume.

2. Books other than 7-day and 14-day ones may be kept out 28 days. **Books cannot be renewed or transferred.**

3. Books overdue are subject to a fine of one cent a day for fourteen days, **and five cents a day for each day thereafter.**

4. Neglect to pay the fine will debar from the use of the Library.

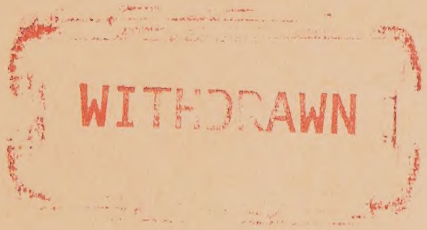
5. No book is to be lent out of the house of the person to whom it is charged.

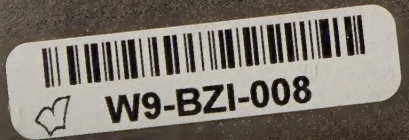
6. Any person who shall soil (deface) or damage or lose a book belonging to the Library shall be liable to such fine as the Directors may impose; or shall pay the value of the book or of the set, if it be a part of a set, as the Directors may elect. All scribbling or any marking or writing whatever, folding or turning down the leaves, as well as cutting or tearing any matter from a book belonging to the Library, will be considered defacement and damage.

B 19 1917

6·St48 7C3

APR 4 1917
APR 28 1917
MAY 14 1917
MAY 24 1917
JUL 20 1917




W9-BZI-008